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Portrait by H. W. Phelps
art critic 4/15-1916

*Washington Evening
Star.*

Tom
**Helen W. Phelps, 80,
Portrait Artist, Dies**

By the Associated Press.

1944

NEW YORK, Feb. 7.—Helen Watson Phelps, 80, portrait painter, died yesterday.

Paintings by Miss Phelps are in the collections of the Providence (R. I.) Arts Club, National Art Institute, Washington, and the art museums of San Diego, Calif., and Newark, N. J.

She won honorable mention at the Buffalo exposition of 1901, the Woman's Art Club prize in 1907 and the Watrous figure prize at the exhibition of the Association of Women Painters and Sculptors in 1914.

A daughter of Dr. Thaddeus Phelps of Attleboro, Mass., she received her professional education in Providence and Paris.

The Paintings of Helen Watson Phelps

THE PAINTINGS OF HELEN WATSON PHELPS
BY STUART HENRY
JULY-1916-15.

HELEN WATSON PHELPS is well known as a practised craftsman in oils. It may therefore seem at first strange that she is at the same time a bold explorer in problems of light and flesh such as the world is distinctly familiar with in modern France. She is able to look upon her art for the exclusive love of it and so has attacked advanced positions on the progressive firing-line of the world pictorial. Her sure brush here may be accounted for by her years at Julian's and under Collin and Besnard.

Her nude forms in the chiaroscuros of green woods, or in cosy interiors where mixed lights tend to bring out the infinite beauties of the flesh, evidence what the late Mr. Hopkinson Smith would have indicated as an amazing lot of thought. The American public, that is to say the American taste, owing to its Puritan antecedents, has shrunk from the nude in painting. And still the Yankee papa or mama, who has shuddered at the thought of buying a divinely artistic nude for their home, has flocked as a matter of course with the young offspring to the Broadway musical shows where unclothedness frankly makes up in interest for the absence of any true art. This illogical attitude is happily improving.

Helen Phelps's collection of works at the Arlington Galleries this spring furnished a little symphony of flesh and air harmonies. *Through the Woods* was a sylvan dream of two figures running, so thrilled with nature in light and action that it might have been sensitively called *The Echo*. *A Cup of Tea* reflected a complicated interior whose plexus of lights from rare *objets de vertu* was counter-matched by the rich tones of the partly draped model resting from her duties. *The Purple Bowl* was a scheme of flesh tones etherealized in terms of a colourful imagination haunted with a vague phrase of unrealizable beauty. *Copper and Gold*, a beautiful and ample nude, is familiar to the New York public, having been awarded the figure prize at last spring's exhibition of the Association of Women Painters and Sculptors. A similar canvas by this artist was one of the late Mr. Hearn's last purchases at the Academy.

Portraits is the other specialty of Helen Phelps, to whom uninhabited landscapes—that favourite subject of American painters—do not appeal.

Her *Japanese Lady*, with her engaging smile so little expected in an oriental countenance, is a rapid sketch, begun and ended quickly under the impulse of a sudden inspiration. A more elaborate and careful canvas is the *Portrait of Mrs. H.*, where a difficult problem of lighting and of textures and hues is tastefully mastered. In it the blending of naturally hostile colours is accomplished with a refinement of harmony which France has taught American artists. A writer upon art has remarked that Miss Phelps gets the spirit of the sitter. There is a distinct and inherent individuality about each portrait, so that no one can enter a portrait gallery and say with an off-hand glance, "That is a Helen Phelps!" This contributes to her successful handling of children as subjects.

In her mountain studio at Elizabethtown, N. Y., where she passes her summers when not in Europe, she paints in the open air. In Paris, in Normandy, in Italy, she wields her brush whenever and wherever the mood is upon her. Out of the wealth of travel, of sojourns in choice spots, and of unusual opportunity, she has garnered many prizes and honourable mentions along paths little frequented by conventional American painters. This is all the more interesting since she came from cold New England. But, you see, her art home has been the Left Bank of the Seine.

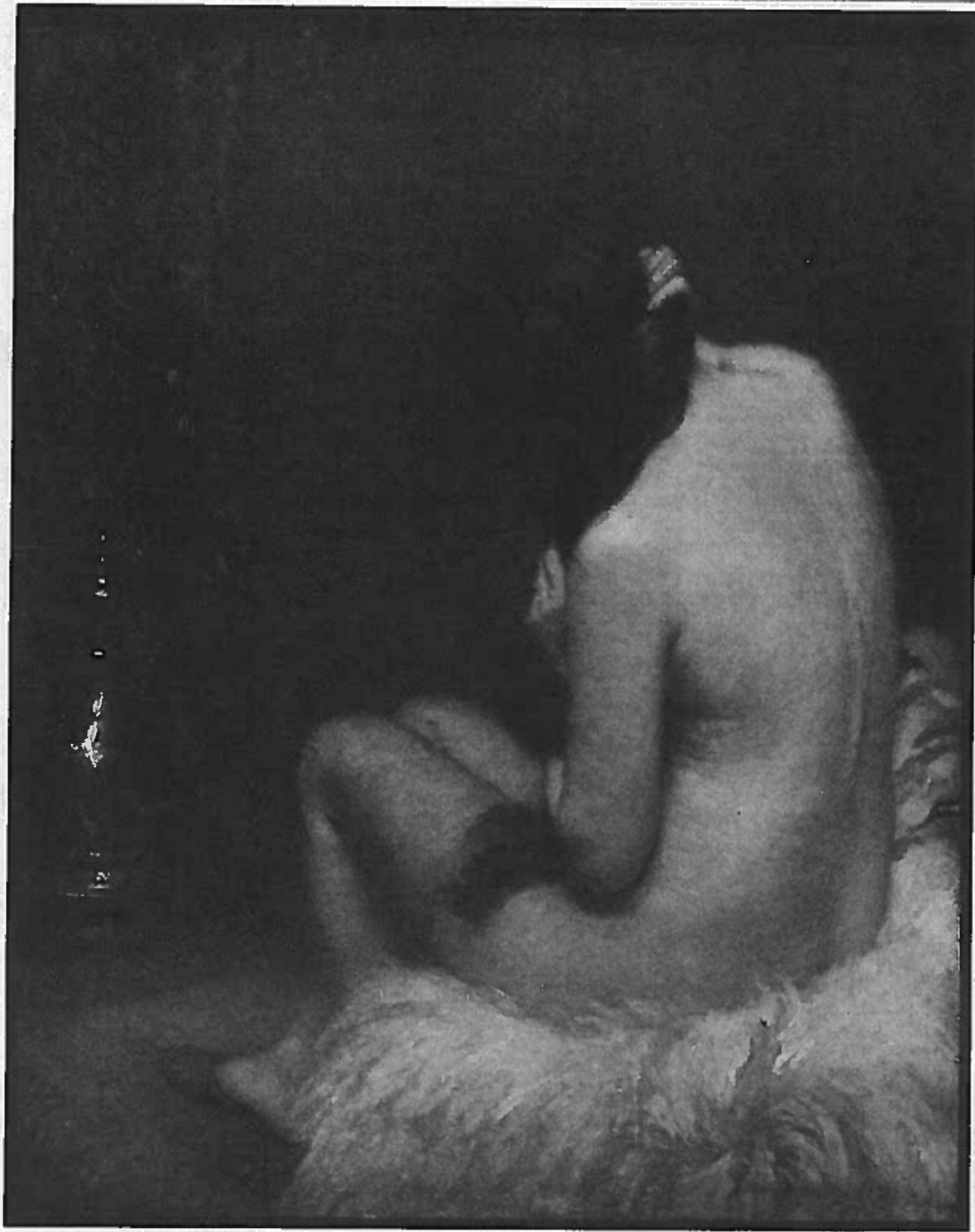


PORTRAIT OF MRS. H.

BY HELEN WATSON PHELPS



COPPER AND GOLD
BY HELEN WATSON PHELPS



In "Copper and Gold" the wonderful play of light upon the red hair and the creamy tints of the flesh recalls Manet's remark:
 "The principal person in the picture is the light!"

A Distinguished American Woman Painter

The Work of
Helen Watson Phelps
 By Gardner Teall

SOMEONE once referred to certain paintings by an American artist as "the reminders of an ancient Puritanism, which had a grave work to do and which seldom dared to look upon the face of human pleasure or human gayety." A few weeks ago a well-known critic

stood before a beautiful painting in the Thirtieth Annual Exhibition of American Art in Chicago.

"It is an exceptionally fine painting," he replied. "And I do think

"Copper and Gold" was the first it displayed; Helen Watson Phelps the artist who painted it. "That is an exceptionally fine painting," I remarked to my *confrère*. "What do you think of it?"

(Concluded on page 222)